Dear State Administrative Agency (SAA) Representatives:

As the State Administrative Agency (SAA) representative for the State of Alabama, the National Governors' Association (NGA) representative to SAFECOM[1], and a member of the Joint SAFECOM and National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC[2]) Funding and Sustainment Committee, I am forwarding several valuable resources developed by the Funding and Sustainment Committee.

Since 2007, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) has worked with SAFECOM, NCSWIC, and federal granting agencies to develop the annual *SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants (SAFECOM Guidance)*. The *SAFECOM Guidance* provides information for entities applying for federal grants, including information on allowable emergency communications costs, communication best practices, technical standards to ensure public safety communications equipment and systems are interoperable with surrounding systems, and guidance for safeguarding compliance with standards.

In 2017, DHS has required, in its Standard Terms and Conditions, all recipients receiving federal financial assistance awards (i.e., grants) from DHS for emergency communications equipment and activities must comply with the *SAFECOM Guidance*, including provisions on technical standards that ensure interoperable communications. Appendix D of the *SAFECOM Guidance* provides information on requirements for DHS grantees, which includes:

- Coordination of projects with the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), to confirm the project supports (and does not conflict with) the statewide communication interoperability plan (SCIP)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) training and reporting compliance
- Spectrum coordination requirements
- Compliance with Project 25 (P25)[3] standards per the P25 Compliance Assessment Program (CAP)[4]

To help ensure compliance with Project 25 (P25) standards, SAFECOM has released the *SAFECOM Guidance Frequently Asked Questions: Understanding Project 25 Standards and Compliance* (*P25 FAQ*). The *P25 FAQ* is intended to educate decision-makers on P25 standards and P25-related grant requirements, and to help decision-makers ensure proposed projects for funding are compliant with P25 standards. Standards-based equipment enables interoperability between public safety agencies from

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[1] SAFECOM is a public safety advisory organization, comprised of representatives from major public safety associations, dedicated to improving emergency communications capabilities and interoperability.

[2] NCSWIC develops products and services to assist Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) from the 56 States and Territories to promote and coordinate activities designed to improve emergency communications capabilities and interoperability.

[3] TIA-102 Standards have been developed for public safety narrowband communications. P25 Standards were adopted by the P25 Steering Committee to ensure manufacturers develop and deliver interoperable equipment for public safety communications.

[4] The P25 Compliance Assessment Program (P25 CAP) ensures P25 equipment complies with P25 standards for interoperability across suppliers. P25 CAP testing is a voluntary process managed by DHS OIC. More information on the P25 CAP including the Compliance Assessment Bulletins (CABs), test results for manufacturer products along with a complete list of P25 CAP Compliant Approved (Grant Eligible) Equipment can be found at the following website: https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/p25-cap.

various disciplines, jurisdictions, and levels of government, and helps to ensure responders can talk to one another, when needed.

As the SAA for my state, I found this information on P25 compliance beneficial, and wanted to forward it to you, so you understand (a) the P25 standard, and (b) the grant requirement.

Additionally, I wanted to share some best practices states have shared for ensuring P25 compliance. I have found these examples useful. States have:
- Issued guidance to potential sub-recipients stating proposals seeking funding for emergency communications systems and equipment must be P25 compliant, and must include information verifying compliance
- Consulted with the SWIC and/or technical experts during the review of proposals to ensure public safety communications equipment listed is P25 compliant (a grants best practice)
- Informed recipients they will only include P25 compliant projects, in the state's final grant application

In addition, SAFECOM and NCSWIC heard from many state and local representatives on the need for information to educate decision-makers on land mobile radio (LMR) technologies and standards. As a result, the Joint SAFECOM and NCSWIC Funding and Sustainment Committee published:

- [Land Mobile Radio 101](#)
- [Land Mobile Radio for Decision-Makers](#)
- [Land Mobile Radio for Project Managers: A Primer on P25](#)

With the introduction of new technologies, SAFECOM and NCSWIC continue to stress the need to maintain and sustain current radio systems. To assist state and local agencies, materials were developed by SAFECOM and NCSWIC to educate state and local decision-makers on public safety communications systems, and to share methods for funding improvements to public safety communication systems. All of the products are available on the [Funding Page](#) of the SAFECOM website, under the section titled, '*Sustaining Public Safety Communications Systems*.'

I wanted to be sure to share these resources with you, so you can share with your public safety agencies, and use them during the review and evaluation of funding proposals. I have found them useful in my work; my state has already used these documents to inform officials on public safety needs, and to help garner support for public safety communications projects. If you have any questions or feedback on these materials, please contact SAFECOM at SAFECOMGovernance@HQ.DHS.GOV.

Sincerely,

Shirrell Roberts

SAA for State of Alabama
SAFECOM Member
SAFECOM/NCSWIC Funding and Sustainment Committee Member

CC: Chief Gerald Reardon [Retired], SAFECOM Chair, Cambridge Fire Department
    Nikki Cassingham, NCSWIC Chair, Oklahoma Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)